

BUTTERFIELD'S OVERLAND MAIL

For two decades before the establishment of the great Butterfield Overland Mail in 1858 there had been considerable agitation throughout the United States for an improved method of communication between the east and west coasts. Asa Whitney and others played a prominent part in the advocacy of a Pacific railroad, but during the forties the scheme gave little promise of immediate realization.

The first regular United States mail service to the Pacific Coast was inaugurated in 1847.¹ It was a monthly ocean mail carried via the Isthmus of Panama. Overland mail service to the inter-mountain region was begun in 1850,² but it was on a schedule that permitted a single team to make the entire trip. One such line ran from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, another from San Antonio, Texas, to Santa Fe; a third ran from Independence, Missouri, to Salt Lake City, and a fourth from Sacramento to the Mormon capital. These latter two might be considered as constituting one through line, but since the time consumed in making the trip was so great, this route was employed for communication with the inter-mountain region only. The ocean mail made much better time and was used exclusively for through correspondence.

During the early fifties the Pacific railroad project was pushed with increased vigor. In the second session of the 32d Congress (1852-3) the Senate gave more time and attention to this project than to any other.³ In January, 1853, Senator Gwin of California, introduced a bill to authorize the construction of a Pacific railroad. A trunk line was to run from San Francisco by way of Albuquerque and along the Red River. Numerous branches were provided for. In fact the bill was framed to satisfy the demands of all sections. The result was a proposition too extensive to be practicable. It was, as Senator Cass said, "too magnificent"⁴ to get the necessary support, and the bill failed. However, the discussions had shown the need of more accurate information on the subject, and so the Army Appropriation Bill of March, 1853, was amended to provide for the survey of such routes as the Secretary of War should deem expedient.⁵ Five corps of engineers were put into the field and five transcontinental routes were explored.⁶

¹ United States Statutes at Large, IX: 187.

² Little, *Mail Service Across the Plains*, p. 1. (Bancroft Mss.)

³ Davis, *The Union Pacific Railway*, p. 44.

⁴ Congressional Globe 32d Cong. 2d Sess. Vol. XXVI, p. 285.

⁵ Cong. Globe 32d Cong. 2d Sess. Appendix p. 352. *Laws of the United States*, Chap. 36; sec. 10, Approved Mar. 3, 1853.

⁶ Albright, George L. "Official Explorations for Pacific Railroads."

By 1855 the reports of the explorations were before Congress and it was evident that there were several practical routes. In January, 1855, Senator Douglas introduced a bill providing for the construction of three railroad lines to the Pacific. It passed the Senate by a close vote,⁷ but failed in the House of Representatives. A contest which ensued dissipated the support of the general proposition. There was a majority in each house of Congress in favor of the general project of a Pacific railroad, but slavery sectionalism had become so strong that the choice of a route was almost impossible. Added to this difficulty was the rivalry among various cities—New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis, Chicago—each of which desired to become the eastern terminus of the Pacific railroad.

In the face of these conditions, Congressmen from the West, finding their railroad projects defeated or sidetracked, turned their attention to a second-choice method of communication with the Pacific coast. During February, March, and April, 1856, four separate bills were introduced providing for an overland mail to San Francisco.⁸ Finally in August, near the close of the session, Senator Weller introduced an amendment to the annual Post Office Appropriation Bill providing for a semi-weekly mail service between the Missouri River and San Francisco. The mail was to be carried in four-horse coaches within a nineteen-day schedule, and the compensation was not to exceed \$500,000.00 per annum.⁹

The advocates of the amendment asserted that the railroad surveys had given assurance that the overland coach service was practicable; that the appropriation for wagon roads had created a sort of moral obligation to put coaches upon them; and that since eastern Congressmen had adequate means of communication with their constituents, the best possible facilities should be afforded to all.¹⁰ The opponents questioned the practicability of carrying the mail at the price stipulated and argued that by the amendment the legislative branch of government was intruding upon the prerogatives of the executive department. The amendment was adopted by the Senate but rejected in the House, and subsequently was lost in a conference committee.¹¹

⁷ Passed the Senate Feb. 19, 1855, by vote of 24 to 21.

⁸ Cong. Globe 34th Cong. 1 Sess. Feb. 14, 1856, Mr. Weller of California introduced an overland mail bill. Subsequent bills were presented Mar. 2nd, Mar. 25th, and April 17th, by Mr. Herbert, Mr. Phelps of Missouri, and Mr. Kennett, respectively.

⁹ Cong. Globe, 34 Cong. 1 Sess. p. 2201.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2202.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2225.

Having so nearly succeeded in August, 1856, the advocates of the overland mail were spurred to vigorous action in the short session beginning in December. Several bills were introduced and referred to the Committee on Post Office and Post Roads. Under the able chairmanship of Senator Rusk of Texas, the Senate committee gave full consideration to the proposals, consulted experienced western mail contractors, and earnestly endeavored to frame a bill that would be practicable and acceptable. Finally the bill was framed and again attached in the form of amendments to the annual Post Office Appropriation Bill.

Compared with the bill of the preceding session, this one offered higher remuneration and also extended the time for making the trip. The framers intended to permit a fairly liberal contract, as an inducement to responsible bidders; for the government had had considerable experience with contractors who had bid too little and then had come to Congress for an extra allowance.

Profiting from the experience with the Pacific Railroad bills which had been defeated through sectional conflicts, the framers of this measure left undetermined the route and the eastern terminus.

When the bill came up in the Senate on February 27th, it evoked considerable debate.¹² Opponents of the measure pointed to the already heavy expense for the ocean mail to California and strongly advised against a further increase. Mr. Crittenden of Kentucky argued for the principle that the Post Office Department should be as nearly self-supporting as possible. "Wait until your line can go a little further towards supporting itself. . . . It is out of season, out of time, inappropriate, extravagant, exaggerated in the highest degree. . . . Here is one route established by sea (to California) at a cost of nearly one million of dollars, and then there is a land communication to Salt Lake City from the western part of Missouri and from Salt Lake City to Sacramento. . . . You have then, perhaps, \$1,300,000 now of annual expense in carrying the mail to California. . . . The question is whether you will add to it \$600,000 or \$300,000 more."¹³

In reply to the economy argument, Senators spoke of the full treasury and prospects of ultimate repayment. Mr. Johnson, of Arkansas, said: "It is almost impossible to tell when we shall ever succeed in obtaining an overland communication through our own territory with the Pacific Ocean. I imagine, however, that there never was a time in our history when this government was so well able to make an effort towards the accomplishment of that object as now. The discus-

¹² Cong. Globe 34th Cong. 3d Sess. Appendix.

¹³ Cong. Globe 34th Cong. 3d Sess. p. 313.

sions on the tariff bill yesterday demonstrated the fact that there are millions in the treasury not only for the purpose of making what is certainly a fair and reasonable experiment, but millions that we do not know what to do with.”¹⁴

Supporters of the measure denounced the ocean mail service and the Panama Railroad as gigantic monopolies that could be broken only by the establishment of this competitive route. “How can we ever supersede the steamships unless we have a mail across the continent?” asked Senator Gwin of California. “We are entirely at the mercy of a steamship company—a gigantic monopoly,”¹⁵ Senator Rusk said. “We have a simple proposition before us—it is whether you will continue a contract for a mail, twice a month, across the Isthmus of Panama at \$900,000 a year, or whether you will make an experiment to see whether you can get the mail service performed twice a week through your own territory for \$600,000 a year.”¹⁶ He was of course winking at the fact that this was to be a *letter* mail only and that the ocean service would still continue.

The supporters of the measure had objects in view other than merely the transportation of the mail to California. Senator Weller admitted: “I confess that I not only desire to have this mail route but what I regard as equally important, I desire to have a good emigrant route. I believe, by the establishment of a mail route with little posts every ten miles you will have in fact military posts all along that road. In this way you will give protection to your emigrants. That is what I am after. . . . This I regard as vastly important to the future interest of your possession on the Pacific. One cannot advise a family to go overland at the present time, because of hostile tribes of Indians in the way, and the unprotected condition of the road. But give us the mail route, let us establish little posts at every ten miles and then the emigration will be safe.”¹⁷

The argument was also advanced that rapid communication with the Pacific Coast would bind that region to the Union and prevent the possibility of the future establishment of a separate nation beyond the Sierras.¹⁸

When finally the vote was taken, the Senate registered 24 for, and

¹⁴ Cong. Globe, 34th Cong. 3d Sess. Appendix p. 310.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

¹⁷ Cong. Globe, 34th Cong. 3d Sess. p. 317.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Mr. Brodhead of Pennsylvania, p. 312; Mr. Benjamin of Louisiana p. 308.

10 against the amendments.¹⁹ The House failed to agree so a committee of conference was named.²⁰ The Conference Committee recommended the amendments providing for the overland mail line; Congress accepted their report, and, on March 3, 1857, the Post Office Appropriation Bill became a law. The amendments relating to the overland mail read:

"Sec. 10. And be it further enacted, That the Postmaster General be, and he is hereby, authorized to contract for the conveyance of the entire letter mail from such point on the Mississippi River as the contractors may select, to San Francisco, in the State of California, for six years, at a cost not exceeding \$300,000 per annum for semi-monthly, \$450,000 for weekly, or \$600,000 for semi-weekly, at the option of the Postmaster General.

"Sec. 11. And be it further enacted, That the contract shall require the service to be performed with good four-horse coaches or spring wagons, suitable for the conveyance of passengers, as well as the safety and security of the mails.

"Sec. 12. And be it further enacted, That the contractors shall have the right of preemption to three hundred and twenty acres of any land not then disposed of or reserved, at each point necessary for a station, not to be nearer than ten miles from each other; and provided that no mineral land shall be thus preempted.

"Sec. 13. And be it further enacted, That the said service shall be performed within twenty-five days for each trip; and that before entering into such contract, the Postmaster General shall be satisfied of the ability and disposition of the parties bona-fide and in good faith to perform the said contract, and shall require good and sufficient security for the performance of the same; the service to commence within twelve months after signing the contract."²¹

The Post Office Department on the 20th of April, 1857, advertised for bids to perform the overland mail service provided for in the above act. Bidders were to name the starting point on the Mississippi River and the intermediate points proposed to be embraced in the route. Separate proposals were invited for semi-monthly, weekly, and semi-weekly trips.²²

Nine bids were received. Three of these proposed routes from Memphis west through Arizona and New Mexico to Southern California and thence north to San Francisco. One bid by John Butterfield and others proposed this southern route with St. Louis as the point of beginning, and in another bid the same parties proposed a forked line from St. Louis and from Memphis, converging at some point east of Albuquerque. Two bids did not indicate the route, but proposed

¹⁹ Cong. Globe. 34th Cong. 3d Sess. p. 321. Those voting "Yea" were: Messrs. Benjamin, Bigler, Collamer, Douglas, Durkee, Fish, Fitch, Foot, Foster, Green, Gwin, Harlan, Houston, Johnson, Jones of Iowa, Nourse, Pratt, Rusk, Seward, Slidell, Stuart, Thomson of N. J., Weller, and Wilson—24.

Those voting "Nay" were: Messrs. Biggs, Clay, Crittenden, Hunter, Jones of Tenn., Mason, Reid, Thompson of Ky., Toombs, and Yulee.

²⁰ The Conference Committee consisted of Messrs. Gwin, Rusk, and Collamer of the Senate; and Davis, Mace, and Denver of the House.

²¹ United States Statutes, 1855-7, Chapter 96. Law approved March 3, 1857.

²² Postmaster General's Report of 1857. In Sen. Ex. Doc. 35th Cong. 1 Sess. Vol. III, p. 986. (Serial No. 921.)

beginning at St. Louis and at Gaines' Landing respectively. One proposal named the route via Salt Lake City. Another proposed this route in the main, with a detour north of Salt Lake City by way of Soda Springs, Idaho. Still another proposed a more northern route from St. Paul, by way of Fort Ridgely, South Pass, Humboldt River, and Noble's Pass to San Francisco.²³

After considerable deliberation the Postmaster General and his assistants selected a route "from St. Louis, Missouri, and from Memphis, Tennessee, converging at Little Rock, Arkansas; thence via Preston, Texas, or as nearly so as may be found advisable, to the best point of crossing the Rio Grande, above El Paso, and not far from Fort Fillmore; thence along the new road being opened and constructed under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, to Fort Yuma, California; thence through the best passes and along the best valleys for safe and expeditious staging, to San Francisco."²⁴

No bid had been received for this particular route, but all bidders agreed that their respective bids might be held and considered as applying to it. The Postmaster General, "looking at the respective bidders, both as to the amount proposed and the ability, qualifications and experience of the bidders to carry out a great mail service like this"²⁵ ordered that the proposal of John Butterfield, William B. Dinsmore, William G. Fargo, James V. P. Gardner, Marcus L. Kinyon, Alexander Holland, and Hamilton Spencer for a semi-weekly mail at \$600,000 per year, be accepted. Accordingly, on the 16th of September, 1857, a six-year contract was entered into with Butterfield and his associates. The service was to begin September 15, 1858.

Much criticism naturally arose from the selection of the southern route. A more northern route was followed by most of the emigration, and many had expected that the route by way of Salt Lake City would be chosen. As an answer to this criticism the Postmaster General in his annual report of December, 1857, set forth the reasons which induced a preference for the route selected. He cited that the repeated failures of the mail to and from Salt Lake City to cross the mountains because of deep snow "put that route entirely out of the question."²⁶ Next he maintained that the Albuquerque route also was too cold to insure certainty and regularity for the service, and especially would not afford the desired safety and comfort for the passengers. The

²³ Postmaster General's Report, 1857. In Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 11, 35th Cong. 1 Sess. Vol. III, p. 987. (Serial No. 921.)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 990.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 988.

²⁶ Postmaster General's Report, 1857, p. 994.

minimum and maximum temperatures recorded by the War Department at Albuquerque since 1849, together with the observations of explorers and travelers, he contended, proved that the climatic conditions on this route were unsatisfactory.²⁷

The superiority of the El Paso route, especially for winter travel, was then set forth. "The Department supposed Congress to be in search of a route that could be found safe, comfortable, and certain during every season of the year, as well for the transportation of the mails as for the accommodation of emigrants and the future location of a railroad to the Pacific."²⁸ In substantiation of the desirability of the southern course he cited that Captain Marcy, who had explored both routes, and Commissioners Emory and Bartlett, Lieutenant Parke, and A. H. Campbell, at the head of the Pacific Wagon Road Office, Interior Department, who had gone over the two routes in 1853, '54, and '55—all expressed a decided preference for the one via El Paso.²⁹ Further, the fact was cited that Congress had appropriated \$200,000 to be expended in the construction of a wagon road between the Rio Grande and Fort Yuma. Then the Postmaster General continued:

"As the pioneer route for the first great railroad that may be constructed to the Pacific, the Postmaster General has bestowed upon it all the labor and examination possible. He contends that since the railroads have not concentrated at one point on the Mississippi, this pioneer mail line should point the way by choosing some point west of that river at which the future railroads might concentrate and from which point the line to the Pacific could be projected. . . . Thus it is that we have found *west* of the Mississippi what we could not obtain *on* it—a common concentration of railroads to a single point from which the future railroad may commence, swollen and enlarged in its common stem by the contributions of the railways coming in from nearly every State of the Union."³⁰ He also added that this route might serve a valuable purpose in our dealings with Mexico; it would help both nations commercially in time of peace, and furnish a high-way for United States troops in case of war.

But the arguments so ably presented were not sufficiently convincing for the proponents of a more northern route. They saw in the southern choice a sectional favoritism on the part of the Postmaster General from Tennessee. It was, perhaps, as a concession to the disappointed and dissatisfied section that improved facilities were afforded to northern lines in the ensuing year.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 995.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 997.

²⁹ Postmaster General's Report, pp. 998-1001.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1004.

Let us now note briefly the character of the route chosen. It was, roughly speaking, in the form of a semi-circle from St. Louis to San Francisco, the most southern point reached being about six hundred miles below South Pass. The total distance was nearly twenty-eight hundred miles.³¹ The route from St. Louis was by railroad for one hundred and sixty miles directly west to Tipton. From this point the stage followed an almost direct southern course, going by way of Springfield, over the Ozark mountains to Fayetteville, and thence to Fort Smith, Arkansas, where the mail from Memphis was met. The route proceeded through the Choctaw country to the crossing of the Red River at Colbert's Ferry. From here it continued southwest across the almost uninhabited region of northern Texas via Fort Belknap to Fort Chadbourne. Upon leaving the Choncho the route led across a barren plain, along the Pecos River, through Guadalupe Pass, and across the rolling table-lands to El Paso. From the Rio Grande to Tucson, three hundred and sixty miles of rough, broken country without water except at the stations,³² the course led on to the Pima Indian villages on the Gila River. It then crossed from the Maricopas Wells through a forty-mile desert, striking the Gila again, which it now followed to Fort Yuma. From Fort Yuma to Carrizo Creek, about one hundred miles, the route was heavy with sand and there was no water in the dry season.³³ Here the route left the old San Diego trail, and turned to the north, crossed the mountains at Warner's Pass and continued northwest to Los Angeles.³⁴ From Los Angeles the road went north over the San Bernardino Range through San Francisquito Canyon, across the Sierra through Cañada de las Uvas, north through the central valley of California to Firebaugh, west through Pacheco Pass to Gilroy and thence north to San Francisco.³⁵

It was a route that offered many obstacles to staging. To afford

³¹ G. Bailey, special agent of the Post Office Department who accompanied the first mail east gives the total distance as 2795 miles, but says that this distance will presently be somewhat shortened. 35th Cong. 2d Sess. Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 1 (Ser. No. 977), p. 743.

³² Postmaster General's Report, 1858, p. 742. Description of the route is also given by Mr. W. L. Ormsby of the New York Herald in a speech upon his arrival in San Francisco. He was the only passenger on the first stage going west. Report of his speech is given in the San Francisco Bulletin and the Alta California, Oct. 12, 1858.

³³ San Francisco Bulletin, Dec. 6, 1858.

In the S. F. Bulletin of April 13, 1859, we read: "The Overland Mail Co. have succeeded in sinking several wells on the Colorado desert, in each case finding water at a depth of fifty feet."

³⁴ Postmaster General's Report, 1858, p. 740.

³⁵ A good description of the route is given by a special correspondent of the San Francisco Bulletin who started east Oct. 22, 1858, and wrote letters back to his paper from various points. These are found in the issues of Nov. 5th, 19th, and 27th.

water, wells had to be sunk and reservoirs made. Over the longest dry stretches relays of teams had to be provided. However, the contractors went about their task with energy, and when the year was up, equipment was ready, stations were built or in process of building, and the preparation was such as would insure the successful execution of the great undertaking.

On September 15, 1858, the first mail coaches left St. Louis and San Francisco simultaneously for their long overland journeys. The arrivals of the mail, ahead of schedule time, were occasions of great public rejoicings. In St. Louis the first mail was escorted through the street to the post office by a long procession led by brass bands. In San Francisco salutes were fired, an immense meeting held and enthusiastic speeches made.³⁶ A San Francisco paper thus describes the reception of the Overland Mail:

"At a quarter after four o'clock the coach turned from Market into Montgomery street. The driver blew his horn and cracked his whip; at which the horses, four in number, almost seemed to partake of his enthusiasm, and dashed ahead at a clattering pace, and the dust flew from the glowing wheels. At the same time a shout was raised, that ran with the rapidity of an electric flash along Montgomery street, which throughout its length was crowded by an excited populace. As the coach dashed along through the crowds, the hats of the spectators were whirled in the air and the hurrah was repeated from a thousand throats, responsive to which the driver, the lion of the occasion, doffed his weather-beaten old slouch, and in uncovered dignity, like the victor of an Olympic race, guided his foaming steeds towards the Post Office."³⁷

Upon the arrival of the pioneer stage, Mr. Butterfield, elated at the success of the great enterprise, telegraphed the President of the United States: "The overland mail arrived today at St. Louis from San Francisco in twenty-three days and four hours. The stage brought through six passengers." President Buchanan replied:

"I cordially congratulate you upon the result. It is a glorious triumph for civilization and the Union. Settlements will soon follow the course of the road, and the East and West will be bound together by a chain of living Americans which can never be broken."³⁸

The schedule time for the route was twenty-five days. The first mail from the East came through in twenty-three days, twenty-three

³⁶ San Francisco Bulletin Oct. 11, 1858.

³⁷ S. F. Bulletin Oct. 16, 1858. This was upon the occasion of the arrival of the second stage.

³⁸ Quoted in Root and Connelley: "The Overland Stage to California," p. 13. Butterfield's telegram is dated Jefferson City, Oct. 9th.

hours. Mr. W. L. Ormsby of the New York Herald was the only through passenger. The first trip from the West was made in twenty-four days, eighteen hours, and twenty-six minutes. Mr. G. Bailey, special agent of the Post Office Department was one of the passengers. He reported in part:

"The various difficulties of the route, the scant supply of water, the long deserts, the inconvenience of keeping up stations hundreds of miles from the points from which their supplies are furnished; all these and the minor obstacles, naturally presented to the successful management of so long a line of stage communication, have been met and overcome by the energy, the enterprise, and the determination of the contractors."³⁹

The following summary of distances and of time made on the first trip eastward, is taken from Mr. Bailey's report:

	Miles	Hours
San Francisco to Los Angeles.....	462	80.00
Los Angeles to Fort Yuma.....	282	72.20
Fort Yuma to Tucson.....	280	71.45
Tucson to Franklin.....	360	82.00
Franklin to Fort Chadbourne.....	458	126.30
Fort Chadbourne to Colbert's Ferry.....	282½	65.25
Colbert's Ferry to Fort Smith.....	192	38.00
Fort Smith to Tipton.....	318	48.55
Tipton to St. Louis (by railroad).....	160	11.40
Total.....	2795	596.35
Total.....	2795	596.35 ⁴⁰

The line was equipped at first with the famous Concord spring wagons, capable of carrying conveniently four passengers and their baggage and five or six hundred pounds of mail matter.⁴¹ Later more commodious coaches were used, which carried six or nine inside and one to ten outside passengers.⁴² The team usually consisted of four horses or mules, but upon the more difficult stretches additional animals were attached.⁴³ Most of the horses were mustangs, "wild as deer, and as active as antelope." . . . They were all shod and branded O. M. (Overland Mail.) Stations were maintained at intervals of from eight to twenty-five miles. At first there were some drives of forty or fifty miles without change of teams⁴⁵ but these were reduced

³⁹ Given in Postmaster General's Report of Dec., 1858, p. 741.

⁴⁰ Postmaster General's Report, 1858, 35th Cong. 2d Sess. Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 1 (Serial No. 977), p. 743.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 741.

⁴² S. F. Bulletin March 19, 1860; Dec. 3, 1858.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Nov. 5, 1858; Mar. 19, 1860.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Nov. 5, 1858.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Nov. 27, 1858.

until the average drive was between ten and fifteen miles.⁴⁶ Through the New Mexico and Arizona region the stations were large square enclosures with walls of adobe. During periods of Indian hostility guards of four or five men defended these posts. Supplies of hay, grain, and sometimes even water, often had to be hauled long distances.⁴⁷ In Los Angeles a splendid brick depot was maintained, consisting of an office, blacksmith shop, stables, and sheds.⁴⁸

The through passenger traffic was not heavy but there were usually passengers on every coach. Frequently, however, way passengers were crowded in, to the inconvenience of the through travellers.⁴⁹ The continuous riding day and night for twenty-five days was very tiring and it was a common custom for passengers to remain over at some intermediate station to rest. However it was said that the journey very often improved the health of the passenger.⁵⁰ At first the through fare was one hundred dollars from San Francisco eastward, and two hundred dollars from St. Louis or Memphis to the Golden Gate.⁵¹ In January, 1859, the fare eastward was raised to two hundred dollars,⁵² but was reduced to one hundred fifty dollars in May.⁵³ This fare did not include meals, which cost from seventy-five cents to one dollar each, varying, of course, according to the distance from settled regions. It did, however, allow each passenger to carry forty pounds of baggage without extra cost. In reply to numerous inquiries, a San Diego newspaper recommended the following equipment for the overland passenger:

"One Sharp's rifle and a hundred cartridges; a Colt's navy revolver and two pounds of balls; a knife and sheath; a pair of thick boots and woolen pants; a half dozen pairs of thick woolen socks; six undershirts; three woolen overshirts; a wide-awake hat; a cheap sack coat; a soldier's overcoat; one pair of blankets in summer and two in winter; a piece of India rubber cloth for blankets; a pair of gauntlets, a small bag of needles, pins, a sponge, hair brush, comb, soap, etc., in an oiled silk bag; two pairs of thick drawers, and three or four towels."⁵⁴

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Mar. 19, 1860.

⁴⁷ S. F. Bulletin, Dec. 14, 1859.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Mar. 19, 1860.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 5, 1858.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Jan. 7, 1859. St. Louis Correspondence of Dec. 13, 1858.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 11, 1858, and subsequent dates. Also advertisement of Dec. 1, 1858, reproduced in Dunbar, "A History of Travel in America," Vol. 4, p. 1315.

⁵² S. F. Bulletin, Jan. 10, 1859.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, May 23, 1859.

⁵⁴ Hayes Collection, Bancroft Library. Transcontinental Mails R. 104: 61. The article has reference to the San Antonio and San Diego Mail, but the route for a considerable distance was the same as that taken by the Butterfield.

The Overland Mail line gradually gained in favor until by 1860 more letters were sent by the Butterfield route than by the ocean steamers.⁵⁵ Even in England sealed letter-bags were made up regularly for San Francisco and the English Pacific Coast possessions to go overland in the times intervening between the dates of departure of the Panama line of steamers.⁵⁶

Despite occasional depredations by the Comanche and Apache Indians,⁵⁷ the schedule was very successfully maintained and the trips came to be made regularly in from twenty-one to twenty-three days.⁵⁸ An overland passenger wrote in the *New York Post*:

"The blast of the stage horn as it rolls through the valleys and over the prairies of the West, cheers and gladdens the heart of the pioneer. As it sounds through the valleys of Santa Clara and San Jose, it sends a thrill of delight to the Californian. He knows that it brings tidings from the hearts and homes he left behind him; it binds him stronger and firmer to his beloved country. So regular is its arrival that the inhabitants know almost the hour and the minute when the welcome sound of the post horn will reach them. . . . The Overland is the most popular institution of the Far West."⁵⁹

There never was serious criticism of the conduct of the service upon this line, but the route taken was ever the subject of criticism. Efforts were made time and again to get the contract cancelled or the line moved farther north. It was not until the outbreak of the Civil War, however, that this line was removed from the route over which it had operated so regularly and well.

L. R. HAFEN.

⁵⁵ S. F. Bulletin, April 27, 1860.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, June 30, 1859. St. Louis Correspondence of June 6th.

⁵⁷ Articles relative to Indian depredations and the need of Government protection are found in the S. F. Bulletin of Oct. 19th, Nov. 27th, Dec. 20, 1858; Jan. 12th, Feb. 9th, July 23, 1860.

⁵⁸ The first four mails west came through in 23¾, 26, 25, and 26½ days respectively. S. F. Bulletin, Nov. 19, 1858. The average time made during the six months from Oct., 1859, to April, 1860, was 21 days and 15 hours. This information is from a speech of Senator Latham in the Senate May 30, 1860, obtained from figures compiled by the Postmaster of San Francisco.

⁵⁹ Quoted in the S. F. Bulletin of June 13, 1859.



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